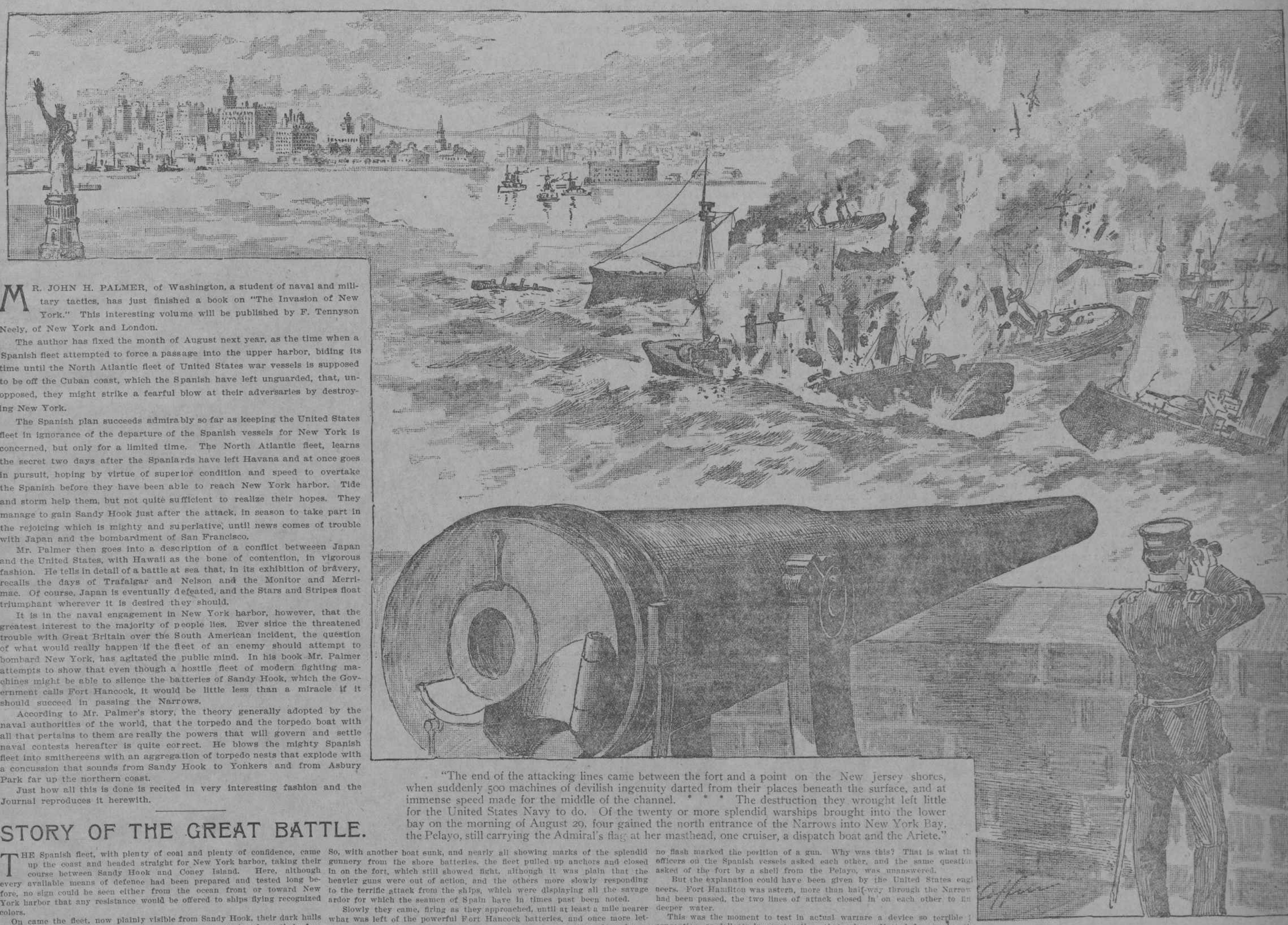
THE SPANISH INVASION OF NEW YORK.

Mr. John H. Palmer, the Naval Expert, Pictures the Coming War with Spain, and Points Out Just How the Spanish Navy Is Annihilated in a Great Battle in New York Harbor.



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MR. JOHN H. PALMER, of Washington, a student of naval and military tactics, has just finished a book on "The Invasion of New York." This interesting volume will be published by F. Tennyson Neely, of New York and London.

The author has fixed the month of August next year, as the time when a Spanish fleet attempted to force a passage into the upper harbor, biding its time until the North Atlantic fleet of United States war vessels is supposed to be off the Cuban coast, which the Spanish have left unguarded, that, unopposed, they might strike a fearful blow at their adversaries by destroying New York.

The Spanish plan succeeds admirably so far as keeping the United States fleet in ignorance of the departure of the Spanish vessels for New York is concerned, but only for a limited time. The North Atlantic fleet, learns the secret two days after the Spaniards have left Havana and at once goes in pursuit, hoping by virtue of superior condition and speed to overtake the Spanish before they have been able to reach New York harbor. Tide and storm help them, but not quite sufficient to realize their hopes. They manage to gain Sandy Hook just after the attack, in season to take part in the rejoicing which is mighty and superlative, until news comes of trouble with Japan and the bombardment of San Francisco.

Mr. Palmer then goes into a description of a conflict betweeen Japan and the United States, with Hawaii as the bone of contention, in vigorous fashion. He tells in detail of a battle at sea that, in its exhibition of bravery, recalls the days of Trafalgar and Nelson and the Monitor and Merrimac. Of course, Japan is eventually defeated, and the Stars and Stripes float triumphant wherever it is desired they should.

It is in the naval engagement in New York harbor, however, that the greatest interest to the majority of people lies. Ever since the threatened trouble with Great Britain over the South American incident, the question of what would really happen if the fleet of an enemy should attempt to bombard New York, has agitated the public mind. In his book Mr. Palmer attempts to show that even though a hostile fleet of modern fighting machines might be able to silence the batteries of Sandy Hook, which the Government calls Fort Hancock, it would be little less than a miracle if it should succeed in passing the Narrows.

According to Mr. Palmer's story, the theory generally adopted by the naval authorities of the world, that the torpedo and the torpedo boat with all that pertains to them are really the powers that will govern and settle naval contests hereafter is quite correct. He blows the mighty Spanish fleet into smithereens with an aggregation of torpedo nests that explode with a concussion that sounds from Sandy Hook to Yonkers and from Asbury Park far up the northern coast.

Just how all this is done is recited in very interesting fashion and the Journal reproduces it herewith.

STORY OF THE GREAT BATTLE.

THE Spanish fleet, with plenty of coal and plenty of confidence, came up the coast and headed straight for New York harbor, taking their course between Sandy Hook and Coney Island. Here, although every available means of defence had been prepared and tested long before, no sign could be seen either from the ocean front or toward New York harbor that any resistance would be offered to ships flying recognized colors.

On came the fleet, now plainly visible from Sandy Hook, their dark hulls growing larger each minute, smoke now and then pouring from their funnels. No sign of anything to oppose them. Twenty miles, fifteen, ten, eight, six, five miles from Sandy Hook. Now a small gunboat shot ahead of the attacking squadron; her speed was great, and seen from Fort Hancock she soon showed like a black speck half a mile ahead of the other vessels, which at slackened speed advanced in open order for some distance, then sheered northeast as though about to turn east parellel with Coney Island Beach.

The ruse was successful; a streak of fire shot out, and Fort Hancock opened on the gunboat from a thirteen-inch gun. The shot, well aimed, struck the water a little behind the Spaniard, who falling off to the north let go a shot in defiance from her single gun astern, and immediately resumed her course at even greater speed. Another shot from the fort added wings to her flight, and still another struck a few feet ahead and went bounding over to Coney Island.

Meantime the fleet, having by this manoeuvre discovered the first point of defence, came about, and with a courage unexpected steamed straight ahead to within easy range of the fort, in three lines in eschelon, and dropped anchor. There was little current and a light wind from the west, both conditions proving favorable to the invaders, whose guns opened fire before the ships lost their headway.

The post of honor and of danger was assigned to the flagship Pelayo first in the line to the south. In acknowledgment of her position, her two twelve-and-a-half-inch guns were first to greet the fort with messengers of steel. Her fire at first fell over the mark, but after two or three discharges a shell was seen to strike the fort, and this practice was maintained. More than once she was struck, but the slant of her armor where hit was always successful in turning the projectiles of the ten-inch guns. Not once did she sustain the shock from a thirteen-inch gun.

Not so fortunate was the cruiser Cisneros, next in line. Her two eleven-inch guns were well served for some time after the battle commenced, and more than once a cloud of dust from the fort told where her shot found the mark; but her career was ended fifteen minutes after getting into action. Twice was she struck, each time recoiling from the impact and quivering in every bolt before recovering from the blow, still, no damage was done; then all at once a shot from ashore cut off close to the deck her short fighting mast, letting down everything aloft with a terrific crash; and before the deckhands had commenced the work of cutting away and clearing off the hampering mass of material something came clean through her port bow on the water line, ploughed its way through steel armor, water-tight bulkheads, and went out deep down below, through her side plates.

She began to settle at once. Slow, but most sure came the end of this splendid vessel, and by the time boats were lowered from the Spanish ships, she had heeled over and was fast settling by the bows. As if by agreement the firing from forts and ships stopped for a minute as the stern arose gradually, and with a last dip, down she went.

The Pelayo still stood the main fire from the fort and was hit time after time, but nobly, indeed, she sustained the terrible ordeal. However, the same good fortune did not extend to the Maria Teresa, which vessel will be remembered as having been last seen in these waters as the representative of a friendly power, taking part in the Columbian naval demonstration. The Maria Teresa, with heavy armor and eleven-inch guns, headed the middle line of attack, and battered away at the fort during the first part of the fight as though there were no such things as forts and guns in front of her; but one shot after another fell on her decks, pounded her side, and cut down everything above deck until she looked like an old hulk from the East River just through a fire. At last, unable to withstand the fierce storm of shot from the most modern models of high-power artillery known, with one big gun dismounted and the other useless, she pulled up anchor and withdrew out of the line of fire, a parting shot tearing a hole in her stern plates as she slowly rounded to retire.

So, with another boat sunk, and nearly all showing marks of the splendid gunnery from the shore batteries, the fleet pulled up anchors and closed in on the fort, which still showed fight, although it was plain that the heavier guns were out of action, and the others more slowly responding to the terrific attack from the ships, which were displaying all the savage ardor for which the seamen of Spain have in times past been noted.

Slowly they came, firing as they approached, until at least a mile nearer what was left of the powerful Fort Hancock batteries, and once more letting go their anchors, the Pelayo and Carlos V., each with four heavy guns, proceeded to complete the work, and continued firing until there was no response from shore; the time from firing the first gun having been one hour and forty-six minutes.

The little gunboat, after exposing the batteries at Sandy Hook, held on her course, and, taking the channel at the head of the lower bay, went straight for the Narrows at full speed. Nothing happened until opposite Fort Hamilton, when bang! from a big gun, and again the gunboat drew the fire and unmasked the batteries ashore. Not abating a fraction of her truly wonderful twenty-eight-knot speed, she flew through the Narrows, nor stopped until in New York harbor. Then taking a sweep of sufficient radius to turn at slow speed, she returned by the way she came, and by the same good fortune escaping the two or three shots aimed at her, safely came out into the lower bay and met the Spanish vessels headed for the Narrows, taking a short respite before attempting to force a passage into New York harbor.

Soon the location of Fort Hamilton was made known to the fleet, and with the formation changed to an advance by twos, the Spaniards steamed ahead once more, prepared to face the fire from shore batteries and to make a running fight through the narrow channel leading into New York Bay.

The attack was well planned. The Pelayo, armored with almost impenetrable plates and guns of enormous power, led the right line, supported on the left by Alphonso XIII., with two big guns and twenty rapid-fire guns as a secondary battery. Then came the seven-thousand-ton cruisers, five in number, followed by Carlos V. on the left, with Lepanto as right support. This order not only brought the heaviest guns available on both shores, but placed the greatest weight of ships and armament in the front and rear, prepared to attack the defending forts ahead and to repel any force advancing from the rear. The Spaniards counted on their attack being successful before the arrival of the United States fleet from the South, but prepared themselves to resist any attack from that point.

It was calculated that the Spanish fleet was far enough ahead to give plenty of time for the attack, and after the passage of the Narrows had been gained a perfect defence could be made against the enemy at the north end of the channel. The advance was made accordingly, and, feeling their way cautiously, the ships continued to advance, occasionally sending ahead for a short distance a swift gunboat. In this order the south entrance to the Narrows was made, and as yet no shot, no sign even that the approach was observed on shore. A good lookout failed to see anything ashore or on the water to reveal danger of any kind, but the vigilance was unrelaxed.

Suddenly, half a dozen rapid-fire guns from the Pelayo opened up, and the shot cut the water ahead into foam; but the aim was too high, and before the smoke cleared off from the first discharge, Alphonso XIII. gave a repetition of the fusillade. Still the aim was too high, and the mistake was fatal. Cutting the water like an express train, the little torpedo boat Stiletto ran under the angle of depression, and planting a torpedo full on Alphonso XIII. sheered off and received the fire from two of the cruisers' quick-firing guns in the left line. Still too high, and the brave little craft, again and again a mark for big and little guns, was soon out of danger up the bay. Alphonso XIII. had gone to the bottom.

The fleet moved ahead. Little use to turn back, for in the southeast, smoke, then rigging, then more might have been seen if the Spaniards could have found time to look for such things.

Only the poor Maria Teresa observed their rapid approach, and it was her last observation. She died brave to the last. On sighting the swiftly advancing United States ships, her engines were started, and when within striking distance, her five-and-one-half-inch guns opened fire at once. The range was too great, and one shot from a twelve-inch gun on the Texas ended her earthly and watery career.

Down she went! and where she was hit would benefit no one to know.

Still the Spaniards held their course. Fort Hamilton came abeam, but no flash marked the position of a gun. Why was this? That is what the officers on the Spanish vessels asked each other, and the same question asked of the fort by a shell from the Pelayo, was unanswered.

But the explanation could have been given by the United States engineers. Fort Hamilton was astern, more than half-way through the Narrows had been passed, the two lines of attack closed in on each other to the deeper water.

This was the moment to test in actual warfare a device so terrible in conception, so delicate in construction, that when adjusted for service the concussion from a great gun ashore was considered sufficient to endanger its probable efficiency.

From Fort Hamilton on both shores had been arranged a line of torpedoes, each directed toward the channel. Their propelling force was compressed air, first from the tubes in which they rested, then from their own reservoirs. These reservoirs were opened at the moment of their liberation. The mechanism by which they were set free consisted of magnets and levers actuated by an electric battery ashore.

The circuit, normally open, was closed automatically by large, carefully balanced permanent magnets, placed in water-tight cases, sunk in the channel at such a depth from the surface as to be readily acted upon by a mass of iron and steel such as a large steamer. At the shore terminals of this system a switchboard connected one or all of the lines at any moment. No danger menaced passing steamships when the shore terminals remained unconnected.

Scientific in design, awful in anticipated results, this sinister product of civilization lurked beneath the waters, a concealed volcano. Still heading for New York Bay went the Spanish vessels, slowly feeling their way. On the right line each ship as she passed fired one shot at the fort. But not a gun responded. The end of the attacking lines came between the fort and a point on the New Jersey Shore, when suddenly five hundred machines of devilish ingenuity darted from their places beneath the surface and at immense speed made for the middle of the channel.

Some went fast, some went faster, all went straight.

Some were intended to explode on striking an obstruction, some timed to raise a thousand tons of water on reaching a certain distance from shore, but all were meant to destroy.

The destruction they wrought left little for the United States Navy to do. Of the twenty or more splendid war ships brought into the lower bay on the morning of August 29, four gained the north entrance of the Narrows into New York Bay—the Pelayo, still carrying the admiral's flag at her masthead, one cruiser, a dispatch boat, and the Ariete.

No sooner had these forlorn remnants of a powerful fleet shown themselves in open water, clear of the Narrows, than the twelve-inch guns of the Terror and Puritan—defense vessels—sank the remaining cruiser and brought the flag down from the short mast of the Pelayo, as a signal of capitulation. This magnificent ship, with the fast Ariete, and one or two others captured in the lower bay, and picked up disabled in the Narrows after the submarine torpedo discharge, were taken as prizes by the American fleet.

A victory so decisive, gained with trifling loss in men and ships, roused national enthusiasm to the highest pitch. Before the firing ceased down the bay, the result was anticipated in New York and all over the country. Telegraphic messages from Fort Hamilton and other points kept everybody informed of the events transpiring. The approach of the Spanish fleet was reported at the instant it was sighted, and from that moment every incident of the engagement was flashed in all directions.

Newspapers started fast steamers down to the Narrows, and their enterprising reporters were only prevented from interviewing the enemy by the frowning guns of the Terror and the Puritan, which, lying at anchor in a commanding position just inside the harbor to the east of the channel, permitted nothing to pass up or down but the one little gunboat which made a reconnoisance in advance of the Spaniards. And this would not have been allowed but for the absolute order that not a gun was to be fired from the defending ships until the success or failure of the new torpedo system had been ascertained.

How well it had more than justified the designer's confidence was now known to half the world, and all the United States went wild. New York broke loose, and the scenes in the city were too mad to describe.

Hotels, business houses, private residences were wide open to all comers. Everybody was shaking hands with everybody else. The universal exuberance of spirit was contagious, and it would have been impossible to keep down to anything like ordinary level the prevailing temper.

Every one had to talk, and talk was good enough; nobody wanted to listen.

Veterans of the last war, as might be expected, went in red-hot; what they had to say was comprehensive enough, especially those who had been in a sea fight or two. But no matter whether a sea fight or a land fight, they were heroes one and all, and nothing was too good for them; even the pension list was not big enough, to hear some people talk.

And the old veterans took it all in, and as many drinks of various kinds as the occasion warranted, and that, surely, was no small allowance. But they got away with it just as easily as they would have swallowed the Spanish beggars if they had only landed.

Everybody was down at the lower end of the city, the cannonading earlier in the day proving an attraction irresistible to all classes, and the entire population of New York and Brooklyn streamed out and down to the Battery; and spread out over the lower part of the city, and on both water fronts from the Brooklyn Bridge on the East to the Atlantic steamer docks on the North River. And every boat, big and little, carried its load of passengers down the bay to meet the victors. For it had been decided by the navy officials that as all dangers of invasion had passed, the United States ships should anchor in New York harbor, and leave the Narrows to be cleared without delay of the sunken vessels which were in the way of navigation.

So the whistles blew, and the flags flew; and a committee was hastily appointed to consider what the citizens should do to express their gratitude for deliverance from a disaster of such gravity as the bombardment of New York, and their admiration of the courage and skill which had turned an imminent source of peril into a cause for universal rejoicing.

What a meeting it was! There was no deliberation, no plan. Everything suggested that would make a show, everything that would make a noise, was no sooner mentioned than agreed to. The city was decorated day, illuminated by night in a style grand beyond anything ever be seen or dreamed of. Entertainments were provided in every hall and t tre. Processions of every imaginable kind passed endlessly through the streets. Every trade, every guild, every society, civil or military, was represented, all gorgeous in color and equipments. Bands of a hundred pieces each provided inspiring music. Choruses of a thousand voices sang the stirring songs of War and Victory long known, and a new Paean to the Union Flag born of this glorious time.

Steamboats on the rivers, railways on the land, street cars in the city, and every other means of transportation carried millions. Markets supplied food, breweries emptied themselves into New York, wine and much stronger drinks were poured out everywhere; and all was free!

Then came the culmination! A banquet was given to the Army and Navy. To adequately describe such a banquet would be beyond ordinary powers. Everything to eat, everything to drink from all corners of the earth was procured. A band of music, every performer an artist; flowers in lavish profusion, decorations to bewilder, electricity to dazzle. Nothing was missing to make this the feast of a century remarkable for great things.

And afterward the speeches! No long-winded affairs of stereotyped exactness, nothing to weary for an instant, every speaker had but one theme, Victory! No need to enlarge on what had been done, everybody knew of that. This was a time of exultation, and the speeches grew shorter, and the uproar grew louder, until a powerful voice gave out the first few notes of "The Star Spangled Banner." Again mere words are weak to describe. The swelling cadences, first heard in one part of the immense hall, like a whirlwind swept through the throng and rose in such volumes of sound as shook the walls, then rolled out into the streets, taken up by a million voices, were sung, shouted, yelled for hours after